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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: HARARE UPDATE ON INTERIM ASSESSMENT FOR SPECIAL
WATCHLIST COUNTRIES

REF: HARARE 1878

1. (U) SUMMARY: The GOZ and Interpol's Subregional Bureau for Southern Africa jointly held a Regional Working Meeting on Trafficking in Human Beings in Harare on November 29-30. The Embassy sent observers to the meeting, at which officials articulated GOZ interest in developing anti-TIP legislation, public education, and law enforcement efforts. On December 2, poloffs met with Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and MFA officials, who elaborated on Zimbabwe's TIP situation. END SUMMARY

2. (U) The regional working meeting was attended by representatives from immigration and police of several regional governments, international organizations, and one local NGO dealing with child trafficking victims. GOZ sent officials from the immigration department, attorney general's office, and Zimbabwe Republic Police. We learned that GOZ is making some progress on anti-TIP efforts, especially in efforts to cooperate regionally and internationally.

3. (U) At the meeting, ZRP officials presented a list of recommendations for the Government, including further regional cooperation, bilateral law enforcement investigations on cross-border trafficking, anti-TIP legislation, and training for law enforcement. An official from the attorney general's office also told us that the office is planning an anti-TIP educational program for prosecutors and judges to help address TIP-related issues in prosecutions under existing law.

4. (U) GOZ officials reiterated Zimbabwe's intent to ratify the Trafficking Protocol of the United National Transnational Organized Crime convention. Officials also told us that the GOZ is collaborating on a Southern African Development Community (SADC) effort with the International Organization of Migration and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to develop a regional declaration on trafficking in persons and to develop a plan of action. The plan of action would focus first on assessment of the scope of the problem in the region, which remains unclear, and then on developing anti-TIP legislation.

5. (U) Interpol Inspector and program host Sam Fernandos, who invited us to send observers, asked poloff to speak at the meeting about the June 2004 Trafficking in Persons Report. We gave a brief overview of the report, the tier system, and the findings on Zimbabwe, and stressed that the USG sought to cooperate with other governments on this shared interest. Several meeting members asked for a copy of the report.

6. (U) On December 2, we attended a meeting with Stephen Mutamba, the Commanding Officer of ZRP's Criminal Investigative Division (CID), other CID officials, and Georgina Kwesha from the Consular Department of MFA. Mutamba said that TIP is a new area of regional cooperation. He said the scope of the problem in Zimbabwe was not known but, to the best of his knowledge, Zimbabwe was largely a transit country and victims were usually undocumented foreigners who, when discovered by law enforcement, were turned over to the immigration department for deportation. Immigration officials at the Interpol workshop noted that they had been cooperating with regional counterparts to thwart illegal trafficking of persons through Zimbabwe from East Africa to south Africa. They emphasized that the GOZ knew little about the dimensions of TIP problems within its borders but consciousness of the potential problems was growing.

7. (U) Andrew Kadungure, another CID official, said that information about trafficking was often anecdotal and difficult to investigate. Kadungure offered as an example the case of two Pakistani girls who were brought to Zimbabwe where, together with two ethnic Indian Zimbabweans, they were victimized by a pornography ring. CID efforts to investigate foundered on a conspiracy of silence among the victims' parents and the Asian community, who apparently were concerned about stigmatization. The CID officials stressed the need for greater intelligence about trafficking and asked

for any information we could provide that would help CID investigate domestically or to cooperate transnationally.

18. (U) The CID officials said another TIP concern for Zimbabwe related to false job offer scams in Europe and North America. Victims travel from Zimbabwe to the destination country where their passports are confiscated and they are debt-bonded. Zimbabwean officials only learn of these cases when the victims are assisted by citizens in the destination countries and eventually return home. The day after our meeting, December 3, the official Herald newspaper carried a front page story on Zimbabwean women believed dead in Kenya after a Kenyan man reportedly confessed that he lured the women there, along with other nationals from the region, with fraudulent promises of work for a Canadian hotel group. CID officials emphasized the need for action by law enforcement authorities in destination countries to thwart such criminal enterprises. They welcomed information from the USG and others that could offer the basis for actions against malefactors in Zimbabwe.

19. (U) Both the CID officials and Kwesha responded enthusiastically to the idea of a media awareness campaign. Zimbabwean radio, TV, and print media already carry public awareness spots on related topics, and the officials felt that raising public awareness would lead to greater information for law enforcement. Kwesha suggested that MFA would publicize TIP concerns through Zimbabwe's embassies. The officials asked for examples of public awareness materials used in other countries.

10. (SBU) COMMENT and ACTION REQUEST: The GOZ's TIP awareness seems to be increasing. The CID and MFA officials responded to the December 2 meeting enthusiastically, and this meeting may serve as a basis for further cooperation with law enforcement and MFA. Based on comments at the November 29-30 Interpol workshop and the December 2 meeting, GOZ's future efforts seem likely to be focused on regional cooperation. We appreciate and urge Department's continued provision of TIP-related materials to share with the GOZ. Any TIP publicity materials would be especially useful as we follow up with GOZ sources on a possible media campaign. END COMMENT.
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